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PROGRAMMING AND COORDINATION MATTERS RELATED TO THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

Proposals for the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001

Note by the Secretary-General

1. The Secretary-General is in the process of preparing his proposals for the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001. In accordance with programme planning regulation 4.2,

> "The medium-term plan shall be a translation of legislative mandates into programmes. Its objectives and strategies shall be derived from the policy orientations and goals set by the intergovernmental organs. It shall reflect Member States' priorities as set out in legislation adopted by functional and regional intergovernmental bodies within their spheres of competence and by the General Assembly, on advice from the Committee for Programme and Coordination. In this context, subsidiary intergovernmental and expert bodies should, accordingly, refrain from making recommendations on the relative priorities of the major programmes as outlined in the medium-term plan and should instead propose, through the Committee, the relative priorities to be accorded to the various subprogrammes within their respective fields of competence. The medium-term plan should clearly identify new activities."

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2. Regulation 4.16 states that:

> "Intergovernmental and expert bodies shall, when reviewing the relevant chapters of the proposed medium-term plan, recommend priorities among subprogrammes in their field of competence. They shall refrain from making recommendations on priority among major programmes. The Committee for Programme and Coordination, when making recommendations, and the Secretary-General, when making proposals on programme priorities, shall take into account the views of the above-mentioned bodies."

3. The attention of the Commission is also drawn to regulation 4.15 which states that:

> "... priorities shall be based on the importance of the objective to Member States, the Organization's capacity to achieve it and the real effectiveness and usefulness of the results."

4. As a result of decisions by the General Assembly on the form and structure of the medium-term plan, sections of the plan which in previous plans were classified as programmes are now termed "subprogrammes". For the review of the Commission, this note presents the overall narrative of the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development and the draft narrative of the subprogramme on the advancement of women.

1. Programme: Policy coordination and sustainable development

5. The primary focus of the work under this programme is the provision of support for central policy-making and coordination processes in the economic and social sphere. The overall orientations and objectives of the programme derive from the Organization's responsibility to provide support for Charter bodies of the United Nations, particularly the General Assembly and its committees, and the Economic and Social Council, relevant resolutions concerning international economic cooperation, and from resolutions adopted by the General Assembly at its forty-fifth, forty-sixth and forty-eighth sessions on the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields; as well as from relevant aspects of the mandate of the Secretary-General as chief administrative officer of the Organization and his responsibilities as the Chairman of the Administrative Committee on Coordination.

6. The programme is under the responsibility of the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development which comprises the following principal units:

Division for Policy Coordination and Economic and Social Council Affairs

Division for the Advancement of Women

Division for Social Policy and Development

Division for Sustainable Development

Office of the Special Coordinator for Africa and Least Developed Countries 1/

7. The Department's work is guided by mandates emanating from Charter bodies and other various intergovernmental bodies to which it provides substantive support, in particular the General Assembly, including its Second and Third Committees, the Economic and Social Council, the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Commission for Social Development and the Commission on the Status of Women, or for which it provides substantive inputs or plays a coordinating role, including the Committee on Natural Resources, the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, the Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development and the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations. An important set of mandates from the Department also derive directly from United Nations conferences, the preparation of and/or follow-up to which was entrusted to it, in particular the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, the World Summit for Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women. It also derives from the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s and the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s.

8. In addition to the intergovernmental bodies listed above, the Department also provides substantive and technical support to the following expert, advisory and inter-agency bodies:

Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Committee for Development Planning

High-level Advisory Board on Sustainable Development

Panel of High-level Personalities on African Development

Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC)

Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development

Organizational Committee and Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions of ACC

Other parts of the ACC subsidiary machinery

9. In carrying out its work, the Department generally aims at providing support for better integration and coordination of the work of the United Nations on the various aspects of development. Its overall approach is aimed at meeting the following general objectives:

(a) To strengthen the role of the Organization as a forum for debate and consensus-building in the economic and social spheres by providing enhanced substantive and technical support to central intergovernmental bodies;

(b) To support standing political processes and relevant ad hoc processes for the development of integrated and coordinated policy responses to development issues and to emerging global problems; for the negotiation of global agreements on norms, standards and cooperative actions; and for the enhancement of the effectiveness of operational activities for development;

(c) To promote and monitor, as appropriate, the implementation of agreed plans, strategies, programmes or platforms for action, including the outcome of United Nations conferences for which the Department has responsibility;

(d) To support the Secretary-General in enhancing policy coherence and coordination both within the United Nations and among United Nations system organizations;

(e) To strengthen linkages between the United Nations and civil society and develop innovative means of cooperation and modes of partnership in areas of common interest, including operational activities for development at the country level;

(f) To increase awareness of United Nations work in the economic and social spheres, including through facilitation of access to United Nations electronic information resources in the economic, social and related fields.

2. Subprogramme. Advancement of women

10. The overall objective of the subprogramme is to achieve effective support for the implementation of actions contained in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, including through expanded interaction with civil society. To that end, within its mandate as set out in chapter V of the Platform and other intergovernmental decisions, the subprogramme will build on its nodal position within the Organization to promote mainstreaming of gender concerns, reflecting a rights-based approach centred on equality between women and men. It will help ensure mainstreaming by continuing to play its historical advocacy role on behalf of women and to gather and analyse information to promote accountability among all actors responsible for implementing the Platform.

11. The main objectives of the subprogramme and the work involved are:

(a) To monitor the extent to which the gender dimension is reflected and acted upon within relevant intergovernmental forums and in policies and programmes of organizations of the United Nations system and to analyse and develop as required policy issues of increasing importance or which may be emerging as global trends. To that end, a series of policy analyses of economic, social, environmental and political issues raised in the Platform for Action will be prepared to assist intergovernmental bodies, especially the Commission on the Status of Women and the Economic and Social Council. The gender analyses will be developed by drawing on United Nations statistics and indicators, specialized research and programme experience of other organizations of the United Nations system, expert groups and seminars, bringing together specialists from Governments, non-governmental organizations and academic institutions;

(b) To improve, as a particular application of its rights-based approach, monitoring of the extent of women's enjoyment of their human rights and whether violations of their rights are dealt with by all human rights mechanisms. To that end, a series of analyses will be prepared, providing information on gender factors that are significant in the review by human rights treaty bodies of the reports of States parties under the various human rights conventions in order to encourage compliance with these instruments. A series of studies on discrimination against women and its causes in specific circumstances will be developed as inputs into the deliberations of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women;

(c) To support, by analysis and collection of information, the development and strengthening of human rights mechanisms, including the optional protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, or the increased use of existing mechanisms;

(d) To monitor the implementation of the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women. Reports will be prepared that will serve as a basis for intergovernmental monitoring of system-wide implementation of commitments under the Platform for Action;

(e) To maintain a continuous dialogue on gender issues among organizations of the system directly, as well as through the machinery of the Administrative Committee on Coordination;

(f) To maintain an interactive exchange of information with specialized constituencies related to the Platform for Action. To that end, a system will be designed and implemented, which will involve the use of electronic communication through the Internet, provision of information to national machinery and specialized constituencies and reception of information from these institutions.

3. Mandates of the subprogramme on the advancement of women

General Assembly resolution 50/203, entitled "Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women", in which the Assembly endorsed the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and set the parameters for its follow-up

General Assembly resolution 34/180 of 18 December 1979, in which the Assembly adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

General Assembly resolution 48/121 of 20 December 1993 entitled "World Conference on Human Rights" in which the Assembly endorsed the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action

Commission on the Status of Women resolution 39/5 on the human rights of women

Economic and Social Council resolutions 76 (V) of 5 August 1947 and 304 (XI) on communications concerning the status of women and 1992/19 on the communications procedure of the Commission on the Status of Women

Notes

1/ Concerning Africa, the work programme of the Office of the Special Coordinator for Africa and Least Developed Countries is, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 45/253 reflected in a separate programme.